

NAVY OMBUDSMAN SOCIAL MEDIA HANDBOOK



Summer 2010

KEEPING FAMILIES STRONG THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Social Media describes the different means by which people, enabled by digital communication technologies, connect with one another to share information and engage in conversations on topics of mutual interest. Social media is an umbrella term describing a variety of communication mediums and platforms, social networking being the most well known of them. While specific mediums, platforms and technologies may change over time the overall trend of people connecting with other people using these means only increases. As a result, the way people get information has changed and their desire to have real conversations with not just people but business, organizations, and government has increased. This presents a tremendous opportunity for all commands to be able to better communicate with their Sailors, their families, and their country.

Navy Public Affairs and the Fleet and Family Support Program have recognized that our Sailors and families are using a variety of social media sites to support each other, stay in touch, receive Navy news, and search for Navy resources.

Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become important tools for Navy ombudsman, and we hope to provide you with some information, recommendations, and guidance to help you feel comfortable participating online as a key voice for your command and its families.

WHY...

The use of social media platforms as a means of communication has been on the rise in recent years. According to an annual Forrester Research survey in 2009, more than 4 in 5 online adults in the U.S. participate in social media. Similarly, a recent poll conducted by the Navy Personnel, Research, Studies & Technology (NPRST) office in November 2009 shows that an overwhelming majority of Navy personnel use Facebook and other forms of social media to communicate. The Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy all participate directly in social media as part of their communication efforts.

Through social media you now have an opportunity to better connect and share information. It is important that as an ombudsman, you use social media to better facilitate communication between the command and the families of the command you support.

We have seen that social media can significantly decrease the isolation felt by family members, especially those outside the immediate geographical location of the command. It also builds stronger ties for more extended family members.



Families moving to a new duty station will often search for the command on social media sites prior to moving into the area or reporting aboard. As the ombudsman, you and other family members using social media will be able to embrace these families early and offer support and information when it is most needed.

Social media platforms are growing rapidly and there are a number of features that are offered that will serve to streamline your communication to the Navy families you serve as well as provide a more personal, informative and visual way of communicating.

GETTING STARTED...

Every day, more commands are using social media. Work with your command public affairs officer (PAO) and/or senior enlisted advisor to better understand the command's intentions for communicating with families (especially for commands during training and deployment) and how you can plug into that plan.

QUICK START GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA:

Site	Good For...
<i>Facebook</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping family members informed where they are already active online• Posting and sharing photos, video and other multimedia• Hosting discussions/gathering feedback
<i>Twitter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Releasing short updates about the command• Sharing updates from mobile phone and/or when in an area with limited bandwidth
<i>Blog</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Posting in-depth updates and content from an individual point of view
<i>Flickr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uploading and sharing photos & videos
<i>YouTube & Vimeo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uploading & sharing videos
<i>Delicious</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share news links about the command• Share links of websites about the command

Avoid establishing a social media account without first discussing it with your command's leadership. As an ombudsman, your communication is an official voice of the command and it is best to ensure that your command is on board with your planned use of social media to communicate with the command's families.

There are a number of options you and the command can consider when discussing official family readiness support through social media. **Based on our experience and observations, we recommend that a command have a single social media presence on each respective platform (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), with active participation from the ombudsman.**

OMBUDSMEN CURRENTLY ONLINE...

Many ombudsmen are very active in social media, particularly Facebook, where a discussion group has been created for Navy ombudsmen. At this time there are more than 470 active participants in the group discussing topics from Operations Security (OPSEC) and webinars to explaining resources and benefits. Ombudsmen registered in the official Ombudsmen Registry at www.ombudsmanregistry.org can request access from the group administrator via Facebook. To join the discussion group log into Facebook and search for “U.S. Navy Ombudsman Program Discussion.” You will then need to request to join the group and will have to be approved before you'll have access to the site.

When you begin exploring social media and conducting searches for ombudsmen you will note that commands have various methods of managing communication through official presences, ombudsmen accounts



and Family Readiness Group pages. Ombudsmen should work closely with the command and Family Readiness group leaders to determine the most appropriate method for their command. Although we recommend that a command use a single presence, we have listed a few options in Facebook, with the benefits and downsides of each, to assist you when you begin working with the command to establish a presence in social media. Ultimately, it is up to you and your command to determine which method is the best fit for how you want to communicate with your families.

I. Facebook account/profile using ombudsman title (Preferred Option)

Example: USS Germantown Ombudsman

Benefits

- Very clear that comments are coming from an ombudsman
- You can use the account to friend all families and Sailors for the command and then send “Inbox” messages to all with specific information
- More personal security for the ombudsman when the account does not mix personal Facebook information with command information and resources (i.e. Your children’s photos won’t be broadcast to the entire crew and their families, same for your status updates)
- The profile could be tied to an ombudsman specific email and easily turned over to a new relief



Drawbacks

- The ombudsman would need to create and manage two Facebook profiles (assuming he/she already has a personal profile)

II. Personal Facebook account/profile

Example: Jane Doe

Benefits

- Transparent with respect to who is serving as the ombudsman over Facebook
- Ombudsman would not need to maintain a separate Facebook account

Drawbacks

- Ombudsman’s personal Facebook profile can become inundated with “friend” requests from families/Sailors
- Requires that the ombudsman notes in each comment that he/she is the ship’s ombudsman for transparency
- Could be confusing when a new command ombudsman relieves you
- Some personal risk in identifying you by name in a public forum as the ship’s primary communicator to families
- If the command chooses to make you an admin. on the official command page all of your comments will show up as coming from that page. Whereas if you maintain both an account under your name and a generic Ombudsman profile the admin. rights can go to your personal Facebook profile while you are still able to comment on the page from an “ombudsman” profile

FAMILY READINESS GROUP FACEBOOK OPTIONS

I. Separate Facebook Page for Command and Family Readiness Group (Preferred Option)

Example: USS Bonhomme Richard

Benefits

- Easily accessed through links
- Offers various applications to support shared information and discussions
- Both are Facebook pages which offer more options for customization and management
- Updates appear in followers' "Newsfeed" making information easier to share



Drawbacks

- Open to the general public
- Personal/OPSEC risks increase with openness of site
- Disconnected from command page and content
- Splits audience with command page on Facebook

II. Facebook Group for Family Readiness Group

Example: USS Nimitz Family Support Page

Benefits

- Selected membership, more private approach
- Can easily send inbox messages to group followers with updates/events/discussion topics



Drawbacks

- Limited on what context can be populated to the page
- Must be a member to access it and some family members might be hesitant to request membership
- Updates do not appear in followers' "Newsfeed" and people have a tendency to forget to go back and look at Group pages
- You can not link to Group pages. They must be found by searching
- Can appear exclusive and/or uninviting to new family members that must request to join

III. Combined Facebook Fan Page for the Command and Family Readiness Group

Example: USS Normandy

Benefits

- Ombudsman can assist ship PAO with posting while ship is at sea
- Family Members/Sailors don't have to visit 2 different pages
- Both the command and FRG have "eyes" on the page
- Questions can be addressed more quickly by the appropriate Facebook Admin. (ombudsman/PAO)



Drawbacks

- Open to the general public
- The variety of information being posted could confuse the audience
- Unit leadership and FRG could disagree on tone/voice of page

You may note that we do not include the option of an official command ombudsman Facebook page or discussion group. We do not advocate that approach as it could *further* split your audience if the command creates an official page and then an additional Family Readiness Group page pops up and your ombudsman page. ***As a single (or in some cases perhaps a two person team), we recommend that your participation in Facebook is done as a profile account (e.g. USS Normandy Ombudsman). This will give you more options in Facebook when working with families and a command and/or Family Readiness Group page.***

Finally, with any presence online it is essential to remember that while the platforms advertise their security and privacy settings, NOTHING online (including e-mail) is fully secure. Facebook Groups that are run as closed groups may appear to be an excellent means to communicate with designated families and Sailors but you should not be lulled into a false sense of security that these sites could not be hacked, monitored or otherwise breached.

SECURITY

We love to talk about our Sailors and tell the world how great they are. We love to chime in to tell anyone who will listen how proud we are to be a part of the Navy. But we need to be aware that there are other people listening. In fact, an Internet posting by the Al Qaeda in 2009 directed their followers to comb through social networking sites to look for details about service members and their families.

PROTECT YOUR FAMILIES by limiting, to the extent practical, detailed information about them (i.e. addresses, towns or schools). Many social sites do not let you post anonymously (like Facebook) and your full name and photo is attached to every posting. How hard would it be for someone to figure out who your loved ones are based on your personal profile? You never know who is watching and collecting information that could be used against your family. There are a number of resources listed in the resources section of this handbook for families to use when considering personal security online.

UNDERSTAND PROFILE SECURITY SETTINGS so you can make informed choices about who sees what in your profile. Just because someone isn't your "friend" doesn't mean that all of your information or even photos are blocked from that person. If you are not managing your personal security settings, it is quite possible that when you leave a comment on a public forum (like the Navy Facebook page) anyone who sees it there (including people you don't know) could see your entire profile. The Navy continues to update guidance to help you and the families you work with better understand these settings on various social media platforms. You can find this guidance listed in the resources section of this handbook.

KEEP SENSITIVE INFORMATION SAFE. Do not discuss sensitive information such as ship/unit movements in advance, personnel rosters,



training or deployment schedules, or anything else that may compromise the personal privacy of the crew and their families and the command's mission.

Dangerous	Safer
My sailor is in XYZ unit at ABC camp in ABC city in Iraq.	My sailor is deployed in Iraq.
My daughter is aboard the XYZ ship heading to ABC city/country in X days.	My daughter is aboard the Stennis.
My daughter is coming back on X date from XYZ city.	She is coming back this Spring.
My family is back in Union, Kansas.	I'm from the Midwest.

Even if you are using a closed site in social media you should still not disclose any sensitive information. While it may appear to be secure, there is no way to verify the security of a third-party site and it's not worth the risk.

EDUCATE FAMILIES ABOUT ONLINE OPSEC. We have observed that Navy Ombudsmen are extremely mindful of OPSEC concerns and have been doing an outstanding job monitoring online discussions and reminding family members when something they post is a potential security risk.

You may find yourself reminding family members to be aware of what they are posting online and educating families about OPSEC, in particular security considerations when participating online. Many ombudsmen have offered suggestions including:

“If you notice something on a command site that is in violation, notify the command site administrator and ask for it to be removed. If it continues to happen, the person in violation may lose their privileges to use that site, and the command may consider removing the site. Everyone should do their part to comply with OPSEC.” – Doreen Scott, Ombudsman Program Analyst, Commander Navy Installations Command

“When I send out newsletters monthly, I always put something in those talking about OPSEC.”

- Kristin Wolfe, Ombudsman, USS Mitscher (DDG 57)

“I give them options and lots of information so they don’t feel like they have to violate OPSEC. For example, I mention in my newsletters that they can come to our FRG meetings to discuss homecoming and port information in an appropriate forum. It is hard to get people to remind people not to post inappropriate information, but if I give them a forum for discussing these items, then they are less likely to do it online. At all these meetings I remind them NOT to post dates on our FRG Facebook page or have countdown tickers on message boards.”

- Jennifer Curl Hathaway Rose, Ombudsman, VFA-14 “The TopHatters

“Once I see or know of someone making a posting [that violates OPSEC], I give them a call and they do remove the postings without any issue.”

- Vanessa Stokely, Ombudsman, USS Hue City (CG 66)

The Naval OPSEC Support Team offers information and OPSEC training materials at their website (<https://www.nioc-norfolk.navy.mil/opsec/index.html>) under the ‘FRG/OMBUDSMAN Brief’ tab. They also operate a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/NavalOPSEC) that includes OPSEC information and products.

HOW WE CAN USE SOCIAL MEDIA

SPREAD INFORMATION QUICKLY.

With a majority of Americans using social media, it represents a key opportunity to get the word out. By its very nature, social media is viral so it is easy to post information in one place and have it quickly spread to your command's extended family.

CONNECT. SHARE. RESPOND.

Social media is social! It is meant to be a conversation. These sites enable you to more easily connect with the command, its Sailors, and their loved ones by creating a space where you can talk to them, they can talk to each other, and everyone can interact with the command. We're stronger together, and social media brings us together.



COORDINATE.

Through a well coordinated command social media presence in which the ombudsman participates alongside command leadership, a command presents a cohesive and supportive environment that inherently leads to stronger family readiness.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL MEDIA USE

1. **Command Leadership Participation:** Participation by the command's leadership is essential to the success of a social media presence. Family members see command social media use as a direct and open line of communication to both the ombudsman and the command leadership.
2. **Keeping Your Audience Connected:** It is tempting to create a social media presence for specific groups or audiences. However, it is more effective to have one central location for families and Sailors at the command. In some cases you and the command will determine that it is beneficial to have both a command and a family readiness group presence, but you should cross promote each other's sites and keep the number of sites to a minimum to avoid confusion.
3. **Encouraging Discussion Sharing:** Social media is most valuable when members of a community are engaging in discussions, sharing resources, and networking. As the ombudsman, you are in an excellent position to encourage this discussion on the command and family readiness group sites. Remember that people will be honest, ask questions, and at times may express frustration. This insight is useful to the command leadership and you so that you can effectively address family concerns. More often than not, we have seen overwhelmingly supportive Navy families on social media — especially when there is an active and responsive site administrator.
4. **Selecting a Page Name:** Consider how family members will find your site and choose terms that new families or Sailors might type into a search engine to find your site. Stick to obvious and easily searchable page names.
5. **Choosing Whether to Participate:** Remember, people want to communicate with one another. Your families can and will create their own social media presence if the command does not have one in place. It is in your best interest and the command's to lead the way by providing a valuable online presence for your families.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS...

Q: My command is currently deployed and the collateral duty PAO has asked me to help with the command Facebook page. What do I do now?

A: When ships or units are deployed, they have less bandwidth and it becomes very challenging to update social media sites. We have found that for many commands having someone shore side help by uploading photos, video, or even just status updates can be extremely helpful. We recommend that you talk to the public affairs office or senior enlisted advisor before the command deploys and discuss this possibility. Ask the public affairs officer for training before he or she departs in case they need your support. If the command is already deployed and you need immediate assistance with a social media platform that you are unfamiliar with you can call the Navy Emerging Integration Team listed in the resources section of this handbook.

Q: A family member has posted something to one of the social media presences that violates OPSEC. What do I do now?

A: The first thing you should do is engage that person in as discreet a manner as possible and ask them to remove the post immediately. Explain that information isn't appropriate for conversation online – use this as a teachable moment. If the person refuses or persists you have the option to block them or report them. This should be used as a last resort because it is difficult to undo and only shifts the problem to out of view – the person will more than likely continue to post inappropriate content somewhere else. In either case you should notify your command so that they are informed of the OPSEC breach and can take appropriate action.



Q: I've never been on Facebook (Twitter, YouTube, etc). How do I get started?

A: First, know that you're not alone. Fortunately most social media platforms are relatively easy to use. The best way to get started is to find someone you know who is savvy with social media to show you the ropes. You can also start your own personal social media accounts so that you can familiarize yourself with how they work. CHINFO has a Social Media Tutorial for Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs that is available on slideshare (www.slideshare.net/USNavySocialMedia/social-media-tutorial-on-facebook-twitter-blogs) and is a good place to start. If you have any questions that you can't find answers to you can always call the Emerging Media Integration Team or your local public affairs officer.



Q: Our Sailors have been extended on deployment and the families are not happy. There is a very negative feel to our social media presence right now. What do I do?

A: First off, do not get discouraged and DO NOT close the page. Closing the page will only result in your families creating alternative presence(s) to continue complaining and you will have less opportunity to understand or influence this conversation. It is important to get command leadership involved to reach out to the families and reassure them. In the meantime, you may want to stress alternate methods of discussing information that if posted online could violate OPSEC. Perhaps have a meeting and ask the Commanding Officer to call in by telephone to that meeting. Continue to be proactive on the social media presence and ask the command to send photos and updates of Sailors for the families to keep connected.

Q: Somebody has hacked into my ombudsman social media account. What do I do now?

A: If you believe your account has been hacked, taken over, or otherwise compromised then the first thing you should do is notify any other administrators to your command's social media presences and ask them to remove you as an administrator. Next you should change the password to every email address that you use to access these sites. The most common method of taking over accounts is by someone figuring out your password through social engineering. Once you have changed the password(s) on your email address(es) and established control of them, attempt to reset your password to your social media accounts. If the person who has taken over your account hasn't changed the default email address then you should receive an email with a link where you can reset the password and regain control. If you do not receive an email to reset the password then you will need to work with the site directly to regain control of the account. In this case contact the Emerging Media Integration Team and we will work with you to reach out to the site. In the meantime you should inform people on your command's social media presence that the account is no longer fully under your control so that they know any communication coming from that account should be treated as suspect.

Q: I did some searching and found that this command already has a non-official Family Group on Facebook (Twitter, YouTube, etc.). What should I do?

A: Many commands have unofficial social media presences established by former crew members, veterans or just fans excited about that command. We do not have the right to remove these presences nor would we want to unless they portrayed themselves as an official presence. In the meantime, work with the command leadership to determine if you want to approach the page and/or simply monitor it and chime in when you have information to add. You may also want to contact the administrator and touch base. They may be eager to have your participation. Regardless, this should not stop you or the command from creating an official presence for the command and its families. These official presences are listed in the U.S. Navy Social Media Directory (lists only command presences, not family readiness groups) which can be found at: <http://www.navy.mil/socialmedia> If you find an online presence that portrays itself as an official presence and the command is not sponsoring it, suggest that your command contact the administrator. If your command is unable to engage with that presence, contact the Emerging Media Integration Team for further assistance.

Q: I am concerned about a particular person who is following our social media presence. What should I do?

A: If the person in question is making inappropriate posts that violate your site's posting policy (a sample can be found here: http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/socialmedia/user_agreement.doc) or are not 'family friendly' you can remove their posts, block them, and/or report them to the site for inappropriate behavior. If the person in question has not behaved inappropriately but still concerns you it is best to monitor them, learn what you can about them, and report any suspicious behavior to your command. It is important to always remember two things when using social media: it is a public forum and people are not necessarily who they claim to be. Because conversations in social media are public they are potentially viewable by anyone, anywhere. Someone doesn't necessarily need to be a fan or follower to read what is posted. And while most of these platforms encourage transparency of the person holding the account that does not mean that less reputable people will not subvert the system.



Q: I am turning over my duties as the command ombudsman to a new person. How should I transfer over our social media presence?

A: If you established your social media presences under a general command ombudsman account, it will be very easy to simply turn over the login and passwords and teach the new ombudsman how the platform works.

If you have been using your personal account to relay information as an ombudsman, you will need to introduce the new ombudsman on the social platform to the audience. If you have administrator rights to the command's social media presence or a family readiness group page, you will need to ensure that the new ombudsman is added as an administrator and you are removed. (Note: If you are the original creator of a Facebook Page, you are currently unable to remove yourself as an administrator). You may also recommend that the new ombudsman post a photo/note introducing herself or himself.

RESOURCES

Sites:

Resource and address	Provides
DoD Social Media Hub socialmedia.defense.gov	The latest DoD social media news, informative videos, and directories of all official DoD social media sites. Created by DoD Emerging Media
Navy SlideShare slideshare.net/usnavysocialmedia	Best practices, lessons learned and how-to guides for Navy public affairs officers, Sailors, and commanders. Created by CHINFO
CHINFO social media hub www.chinfo.navy.mil/socialmedia	Navy social media policy, training resources, and recommended reading. Created by CHINFO
U.S. Navy Ombudsman Program Discussion Group http://www.facebook.com/?ref=logo#!/group.php?gid=242277432495	Place where Navy ombudsmen, commanding officers, certified ombudsman trainers and ombudsman coordinators to discuss best practices, program news and information. Created by Fleet and Family Support Services, CNIC



RESOURCES

Briefs:

Resource	URL
Family Readiness Groups and Facebook	www.slideshare.net/USNavySocialMedia/us-navy-family-readiness-groups-and-facebook
Operations Security & Social Media	www.slideshare.net/USNavySocialMedia/opsec-snapshot
Customer Service: Providing Value to Navy Stakeholders	www.slideshare.net/USNavySocialMedia/snapshot-customer-service
Safe and Effective Use of Social Media	www.slideshare.net/USNavySocialMedia/us-navy-safe-and-effective-use-of-social-media
Recommended Privacy Settings for Facebook	www.slideshare.net/USNavySocialMedia/Recommended-Facebook-Privacy-Settings-June-2010
Recommended Privacy Settings for Twitter	www.slideshare.net/USNavySocialMedia/navy-recommended-privacy-settings-for-twitter



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